

South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan

Preface

What a Plan for South Lake Union Will Accomplish.

- **Perpetuate the role of the neighborhood in the City.**

South Lake Union has served as a commercial and light industrial support area to the City since the late 1800's. It has played a vital role in providing services and material that are utilized by downtown businesses and surrounding neighborhoods. This plan speaks to the continuance of that role through emphasis on provision of a stable and supportive environment for business while fostering a diversity of compatible uses.

- **Recognize the long standing commitment of many area businesses and property owners.**

South Lake Union is characterized by numerous businesses and property ownerships that date back several generations. They have shown a commitment to South Lake Union through their continued presence. They have insisted on an open and inclusive planning process and hopefully will be recognized for the guiding hand they have offered.

- **Recognize the mix and diversity of use.**

South Lake Union has never been and does not want to be a monoculture. It has seen some of the first businesses in Seattle and, in Cascade, contains one of the City's oldest neighborhoods. As it has evolved, it has seen subtle change that has added to, but never dominated, the character of the neighborhood.

- **The plan can end uncertainty.**

South Lake Union has been subject to several major proposals in the recent decades that have cast a cloud over businesses and development opportunities. By making a definitive statement on the future of the neighborhood and supporting that future with appropriate policy and capital programs, the area will flourish.

- **Lay a foundation for long term development**

South Lake Union contains heavily traveled transportation corridors for surrounding neighborhoods and is the location of what maybe the City's last major shoreline park development opportunity. The City owns significant undeveloped parcels it has held pending long-term decisions on Mercer Corridor congestion and development of South Lake Union Park. The Plan's recommendations integrate a Mercer Corridor plan that addresses congestion issues within the resources of the City and supports development of South Lake Union Park and Maritime Heritage Center.

- **The plan can provide new opportunities.**

South Lake Union has the land-base and unique physical relationship with its surroundings to continue to provide new opportunities for business, recreation and, to a lesser degree, housing. The neighborhood "has done this successfully in the past, and with thoughtful planning, can continue this role well into the next century.

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Executive Summary

The South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan has evolved out of a process which has seen extraordinary commitment by area businesses, property owners and residents. They have been able to define those aspects of community development that need attention to perpetuate the health and vitality of this diverse neighborhood. They chose to focus on three components: Neighborhood Character, Parks and Open Space and Transportation. Key recommendations in these focus areas are highlighted below. The full description of all recommendations is contained in Appendix A:

Neighborhood Character

With a healthy respect for the past, the Plan makes recommendations for moving South Lake Union into the future with purpose and character:

- . Develop and adopt design guidelines for the distinct sub-areas within the neighborhood which encourage future developments to reflect their surroundings.
- . Revise certain aspects of the land use code that are eroding neighborhood continuity and jeopardizing the working environment.

Parks & Open Space

The Plan contains a strong recommendation to pursue development of South Lake Union Park and to acquire and develop other needed open space:

- . Adopt a revised South Lake Union Park Master Plan that features our maritime heritage while providing for general open space needs and waterfront access.

- Complete Cascade Playground and purchase the privately owned Denny Playfield as a new Seattle Park.

Transportation

The South Lake Union Plan recommends the following two key strategies for transportation needs:

- A package of smaller, focused improvements to the Mercer/Valley corridor which benefit circulation and access without major property acquisition or disruption.
- Pursuit of a comprehensive parking study to address the needs of the various sub-areas of the neighborhood.

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Plan Development

Lake Union is a designated Hub Urban Village under Seattle's 1994 Comprehensive Plan. As such, it was eligible for finding to develop a neighborhood based plan. Planning for the area was delayed, however, as the City considered the prospect of creating a major urban park, "The Commons," in the heart of the neighborhood and revising zoning and circulation systems in conjunction with the park. Funding for the park and approval for an area master plan was placed before the voters in 1995.

The South Lake Union Planning Organization (SLUPO) was formed in September, 1995 by several community members to discuss the future of the South Lake Union area after the initial vote on the Seattle Commons proposal failed. SLUPO was formed for the purpose of achieving common ground amongst community members on either side of the Seattle Commons issue.

Approximately 80 individuals representing a range of interests in the area attended the first meeting in September, 1995. At this meeting, a core group of 35 volunteers was identified and invited to be part of the initial membership of SLUPO.

The South Lake Union Planning Organization took a brief hiatus during a second vote on the revised Seattle Commons proposal in Spring, 1996. After the election, significant stakeholders in the South Lake Union area were invited to participate in the reforming of SLUPO.

Currently, the participants in SLUPO number over 100 members. Members represent the Cascade Neighborhood Council, the South Lake Union Roundtable, South Lake Union Business Association, area property owners, Center for Wooden Boats, Maritime Heritage Foundation, Cascade Area Business Council, Northwest Seaport and architects working on historic preservation.

The South Lake Union Planning Organization based its neighborhood planning process on past planning work in the area. Committee members have sponsored or participated in a significant number of South Lake Union planning activities in the past. Outcomes and products of these activities provide valuable background for South Lake Union neighborhood planning. These include the following

- South Lake Union Roundtable (Fall, to 1996 to present)
- South Lake Union Park Planning Study (1987)
- South Lake Union Neighborhood Planning survey (questionnaire & results by SLUPO, 1996)
- South Lake Union historic building inventory
- Dozens of transportation studies for Mercer Street, Denny Way, the Seattle Center and Westlake Avenue North

In addition, the South Lake Union Planning Organization recognizes the Cascade Neighborhood Council's efforts on the following:

- Cascade Sustainability Forums
- Cascade Neighborhood visioning workshops
- Sustainability Guidelines

Focused Scope of South Lake Union Neighborhood Planning

Based on prior planning activities, the South Lake Union Planning organization has built on past work by focusing on a few issues where there is broad stakeholder consensus. There is general acceptance of the South Lake Union HUB Urban village designation package. SLUPO has reviewed the City's projected growth estimates as part of the Phase II planning process. Minor changes in the designation may occur as a result of adjustments to shared boundaries with adjoining Villages and Centers or as a result of recent changes in zoning for the Cascade Neighborhood.

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Issues to be Addressed:

- Completion of South Lake Union Park along Lake Union shoreline and identification of other potential green spaces
- Transportation and circulation
- Neighborhood character -
- Participation in neighborhood design/planning efforts
- Character treatment of arterials
- ecologically sound development and life-styles and promotion of ecologically sound business practices consistent within the regulatory environment.
- ease of transportation for all modes within and through the area,
- a variety of open spaces serving the needs of the area and the city, with emphasis on Lake Union, the continued preservation thereof for a wide range of uses, and

Planning Direction: Efforts of the South Lake Union Planning Organization leading up to Phase II Planning have included development of a mission statement, development of a vision of what the planning area will become and identification of issues of highest concern as determined through community surveys and a public workshop.

Mission: To develop a comprehensive long-range plan for the South Lake Union Hub Urban Village which enjoys broad support of primary stakeholders and addresses residential, commercial, transportation, and open space issues, and which will establish long-range regulatory predictability for future development of the area.

Vision: The future of the South Lake Union Planning Area will be characterized by

- a pervasive human scale ambiance consistent with a vital, aesthetically pleasing, safe, and energetic neighborhood which embraces a dynamic intermixing of opportunities for working, living and playing, and
- retention of a significant element of the area's commercial activities, including opportunities for business growth,
- a full spectrum of housing opportunities,